Racial Equity Policy

March 2002

NOVA SCOTIA
Department of Education

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Rationale

This document provides a framework for the development and review of school board policies on race relations and related equity issues. It is based on the work of the department in responding to various issues brought into particular focus by the *Black Learners Advisory Committee (BLAC) Report on Education* and the *Report of the Task Force on Mi'kmaq Education.*

Preamble

The preamble to the Nova Scotia *Education Act* states that

"... the education system should be committed to fair and equitable participation and benefit by all people in Nova Scotia."

Education Act, 1995–1996

Recognizing the inherent and inalienable rights to dignity, respect, security, and worth of all individuals, the Department of Education is committed to

- the fundamental principle that all Nova Scotians have a right to an equitable education that respects their first culture
- the advancement of equity, human rights, and fundamental freedoms as central to the full development of the person
- the promotion of equitable practices as the responsibility of all Nova Scotians

Statement of Principles

Recognizing the historic systemic racism in the education system and society, the Department of Education is committed to

- the elimination of systemic racism in the education system, thus contributing to the elimination of racism in public institutions and society
- the recognition, respect, and affirmation of the racial and ethnocultural diversity of Nova Scotia
- the advancement of racial equity in the education system through its structures of governance, employment, and practices
- the support of learning environments that affirm a learner's inherent right to dignity, security, and self-worth
- the provision of programs and services that affirm and advance racial equity for all learners
- the advancement of racial equity with partners in the education system and the community at large
- developing and promoting understanding and harmony among and between staff, students, and previously identified groups
- providing and promoting anti-racism and race relations, cross cultural understanding, and human rights education within its school system

1.0 Equitable Environment in the Department

Policy

The Department of Education develops and implements policies, procedures, and practices in employment, staff development, program development, and service delivery that advance racial equity in each level and sector of the department.

Guidelines

This policy applies to all operations and functions of the department, including

- all management and employment policies, procedures, practices, and staff training and development
- all programs and programming policies, procedures, and practices developed by the department for implementation by others
- all direct services delivered by the department

Procedure

The responsibility and accountability for effective implementation of the Racial Equity Policy lie with the Deputy Minister and senior executive directors.

The Deputy Minister shall establish an Advisory Committee composed of appropriate representatives from all branches.

The Advisory Committee shall

- establish the process and time frame for reviewing and identifying racial biases and barriers in policies, procedures, practices, programs, and services
- assess annual outcomes and reports and report to senior management and the Deputy Minister as to the progress of the implementation of this policy
- develop an information data and research base to advance the implementation of this policy, including data on
  - the achievements of learners in relation to factors such as race, socio-economic class, and gender
  - the changing nature of society in Nova Scotia and Canada and, in particular, on the emerging demographics, values, and communities
- identify the staff training necessary to advance the implementation of this policy
- be responsible for identifying, developing, implementing, and evaluating additional training requirements, as well as other educational programs and activities that will
  - enhance the expertise of departmental personnel in advancing racial equity in the education system

- be relevant to the needs and concerns of all of the branches of the department in implementing this policy

- consult with the Divisions of African Canadian Services, Mi'kmaq Services, and Student Services (Multicultural Education) in the development of these training programs and activities
- monitor and assess staff participation in these training programs and activities

The senior executive directors shall

- be accountable to the Deputy Minister through an annual reporting and performance appraisal system for the implementation and progress of this policy
- ensure that policies, procedures, practices, programs, and services are revised to comply and accord with the policy
- develop outcomes for implementation of this policy as an integral component of their annual work plan. The outcomes should address
  - employment practices in each branch that advance affirmative action and take into account applicable provisions of the government's Affirmative Action Policy
  - participation of all staff, including contract employees who have a work term of more than six months, in the government's mandatory Diversity and Employment Equity Education Program or an equivalent training program authorized by the department
  - identification and support of additional training needs and monitoring of participation by their staff
  - providing encouragement and opportunities for training for all staff, students, elected school board members, and school advisory councils to develop their knowledge, awareness, and skills in the areas of anti-racism, race relations, cross-cultural understanding, and human rights, as well as encouragement for school staff and students to develop and/or identify bias-free materials for educational needs

2.0 Equitable Curriculum

Policy

The Department of Education develops and supports the implementation of curriculum that is sensitive to and respectful of the culture and heritage of all learners.

Guidelines

An equitable curriculum is based on

- the fundamental belief in the inherent and inalienable rights of all persons to dignity, respect, security, worth, and social justice
- the recognition and respect of the interdependence of peoples and nature
- the historic and accurate representation of racial and ethnocultural groups in all subject areas
- the recognition that language is a primary transmitter of cultural values, attitudes, and prejudices
- an acknowledgement as to the power of language and the need to address its differential impacts on a learner's identity, self-worth, and academic achievement
- teaching practices that acknowledge that language learning develops out of students' home language and their social and cultural experiences
- pedagogic approaches that encourage learners to communicate effectively without obscuring or submerging their racial and cultural identities
- the belief that educational programs and services and the teaching and learning environments must not only be sensitive to the culture and heritage of learners but actively promote the principles contained in this policy

Procedure

The Department of Education shall

- ensure that all curricula developed and/or implemented by the department are equitable and advance racial equity
- incorporate across all curricula critical literacy perspectives that empower learners to identify, challenge, and address racial biases in language usage and text
- ensure that training is available for curriculum development teams to affirm their skills in the implementation of this policy as it relates to curriculum planning and development

- consult with the Division of African Canadian Services, Mi'kmaq Services, Student Services (Multicultural Education), and the Acadian and French Language Services Branch in the review and development of curriculum
- encourage universities with teacher education programs
  - to promote and advance courses in anti-racism education
  - to advance and promote instructional practices that recognize and respect diverse language patterns and constructs
- collaborate with the Nova Scotia Teachers Union regarding academic and professional qualifications pertaining to anti-racism courses and/or training as a part of the teacher certification process
- collaborate with school boards to ensure that the curriculum is implemented in a manner consistent with this policy

3.0 Equitable Assessment

Policy

The Department of Education advances and supports the *Principles for Fair Student Assessment Practices for Education in Canada*. The department advances and supports assessment that affirms racial equity for all learners.

Guidelines

This policy shall apply to all

- policies, guidelines, and procedures pertinent to the development, administration, scoring, and reporting of assessments conducted by the province
- policies, guidelines, and procedures pertinent to the development, administration, scoring, and reporting of assessments conducted by school boards and schools

Procedure

The Department of Education shall

- collaborate with school boards to ensure that all assessments and evaluation practices are developed with consideration to the needs of Aboriginal, racially visible, and culturally diverse learners and in accordance with the guidelines articulated in Principles for Fair Student Assessment Practices for Education in Canada
- ensure that assessments used by the department for adult learners are developed and implemented with consideration to the needs of Aboriginal, racially visible, and culturally diverse learners and in accordance with the guidelines articulated in Principles for Fair Student Assessment Practices for Education in Canada

4.0 Equitable Instructional Practices

Policy

The Department of Education advances and supports instructional practices that affirm racial equity for all learners.

Guidelines

This policy applies to all departmental

- policies, guidelines, and procedures pertinent to instructional practices used by the public schools
- policies, guidelines, and procedures pertinent to teacher-designed assessments and classroom-based evaluation

Procedure

The Department of Education shall collaborate with school boards to

- develop and support classroom instructional practices that accommodate the cultural backgrounds, experiences, perspectives, learning styles, and needs of all learners
- ensure that teachers collaborate with learners, parents, and others, where appropriate, to develop instructional evaluation practices that help all learners to achieve their potential, that are respectful of the learners to achieve this, and that are respectful of their racial identity and cultural heritage
- develop and implement professional development to enhance the teacher's ability to utilize the principles contained in this policy in their instruction and student evaluation practices for all learners

5.0 Respect and Affirmation of the Learner's First Language

Policy

The Department of Education respects and values a learner's first language.

Guidelines

The Department of Education recognizes that

- a learner's first language is an integral part of the learner's racial and cultural identity
- valuing a learner's first language contributes to a positive learning environment for the learner
- the Mi'kmaw language was the first language of Nova Scotia and is the first language of the Mi'kmaq Nation

Procedure

The Department of Education shall

- develop English and French language programs and English/French as a Second Language (ESL/FSL) programming and services that value a learner's first language and enable the learner to build on their prior linguistic knowledge
- encourage universities with teacher education programs to advance and promote instructional practices that affirm a learner's first language
- collaborate with school boards to support training for teachers to implement instructional practices that address the needs of ESL/FSL learners while valuing their first languages
- through the Mi'kmaq Services Division, promote and support the preservation and advancement of the Mi'kmaw language in the public school system

6.0 Equitable Counselling and Learner Development

Policy

The Department of Education supports counselling, guidance, and career and personal planning that address a learner's culture, heritage, experiences, perspectives, background, learning needs, and aspirations.

Guidelines

This policy applies to all departmental

- program policies, guidelines, procedures, and resources with respect to the delivery of counselling, guidance, and career and personal planning in the public schools
- services in counselling, career and personal planning, and other related services provided for adult learners

Procedure

The Department of Education shall ensure that

- guidance and counselling programs reflect and advance the principles contained in this policy
- all in-service training, professional activities, and acquisition of resources to support direction, delivery and evaluation of guidance and counselling programs reflect and advance racial equity

The Department of Education shall collaborate with school boards to

- implement guidance and counselling programs that reflect and advance racial equity for all learners
- provide staff development for all teachers and guidance counsellors to enhance their ability to provide counselling that reflects and advances racial equity
- support guidance and counselling processes that enable parents, learners, and community groups to identify needs for counselling and guidance that are reflective of the community's diversity
- encourage teachers to be sensitive to diversity cultural issues when consulting with parents regarding their child's current educational achievement, progress, and future career plans

The Department of Education shall ensure that direct services in career and personal planning and counselling for adult learners reflect and advance the principles contained in this policy.

7.0 Equitable Learning Environment

Policy

The Department of Education is committed to providing learning environments that advance equity for all learners.

Guidelines

This policy applies to programs and services provided by the department and the public school system.

Procedure

The Department of Education shall

- promote and advance diversity through activities, materials, and resources for use in our education and training system that reflect the principles contained in this policy
- ensure that all programs and services for all learners provide safe and supportive learning environments and respect the rights of all learners
- collaborate with school boards to
  - develop and implement racial and employment equity policies
  - support and advance affirmative action initiatives
  - ensure that disciplinary policies and procedures address racial harassment and that they include support and protection for the victims as well as appropriate education and sanctions for the harassers
  - promote equity and diversity through on going experiences, activities, and events
  - implement mandatory training at all levels to enhance the skills of all school board members, office staff, and school personnel to create environments that advance racial equity

8.0 Equitable Community Relations

Policy

The Department of Education engages in equitable practices with partners in the education system and the broader community.

Guidelines

The Department of Education recognizes that

- effective partnerships are key to meeting the needs of learners
- collaborating with individuals, groups, and communities from diverse backgrounds is essential for the development of Nova Scotia's resource base and its cultural and natural heritages

Procedure

To effectively meet the needs of learners, the Department of Education engages in outreach and consultation processes with racial and cultural partners who are currently not represented in partnerships with the department.

Appendices

Appendix 1: The Mi'kmaq

"As we approach the end of this century, ready to embrace the new millennium, it is fitting that we assume the jurisdiction of our education. For many generations, since the first breath of the Mi'kmaq, we knew how to teach our young. Time has shown that we, the Mi'kmaq, knew best. My vision for the future includes the vision of a people who stand and take charge of their destiny..."

Chief Lindsay Marshall
Chair of Mi'kmaw Kina'matnewey

The Mi'kmaq are the First Peoples of Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, Prince Edward Island, and part of Gaspé, Quebec. The arrival of Europeans on the shores of Mi'kmaq territory began more than 500 years of forceful colonization of the Mi'kmaq Nation. The colonial governments instituted systematic policies to eliminate the history, governance, language, culture, and spirituality of the Mi'kmaq Nation.

Canada continued these policies of forced assimilation into this latter century, in the embodiment of residential schools and, later integrated schools. Mi'kmaq today are living the legacy of the Shubenacadie Indian Residential School, which closed in 1967.

A new generation of Mi'kmaq is reclaiming and reframing their history and entitlements. Jurisdiction of education for Mi'kmaw children is a prerequisite precedent to reclaiming their entitlements.

In 1980, the Eskasoni Band took control of education on their reserve in Cape Breton.

In 1991, the Assembly of Nova Scotia Chiefs proposed to the Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development (DIAND) that a Mi'kmaq Education Authority be established to assume total program control of First Nations education in Nova Scotia.

In 1993, after consultation with the Mi'kmaw communities, the Task Force on Mi'kmaq Education was established by the Department of Education to advise on strategies to meet the needs of Mi'kmaw learners in the public school system.

In 1996, the Task Force on Mi'kmaq Education became the Council on Mi'kmaq Education. The council was established pursuant to the Education Act.

In 1996, the Mi'kmaq Education Authority became Mi'kmaw Kina'masuti now known as Mi'kmaw Kina'matnewey.

In February 1997, a Tripartite Agreement, which formed part of the Final Agreement with the Mi'kmaq Bands in Nova Scotia and the Governments of Canada and Nova Scotia, was signed. This agreement affirmed the province's acknowledgement of Mi'kmaq jurisdiction for on-reserve education in Nova Scotia.

In June 1997, the Mi'kmaq Services Division was established within the Program Branch of the Department of Education to ensure equitable education for Mi'kmaw learners.

In June 1998, the Government of Canada gave royal assent to the Mi'kmaq Education Act (Bill C-30) respecting the powers of the Mi'kmaq of Nova Scotia in relation to jurisdiction for on-reserve education.

Appendix 2: African Nova Scotians

The histories of African Nova Scotians were framed by slavery and systemic racism. Slavery was practised in Nova Scotia until 1833. In 1776, over 3,000 African slaves arrived with the United Empire Loyalists. In 1796, the British shipped 550 Maroon rebel slaves to Nova Scotia from Jamaica. During the War of 1812, over 2,000 African Americans came as refugees to Nova Scotia.

In the 1790s, over 1,500 African Nova Scotians journeyed to "free" Sierra Leone, initiating the Back to Africa Movement. Those who remained in Nova Scotia contributed to the making of a vibrant community and formed the largest indigenous African Canadian population in Canada.

At the turn of this century, African Caribbeans were brought in to work in the coal mines of Cape Breton. More recently, Africans immigrated here from Africa, the Caribbean, and Latin America.

African Nova Scotians have sought and continue to fight for their entitlements, including that of education.

In 1852, African Nova Scotians petitioned against the dismal funding and inequitable treatments dispensed through separate African schools.

In April 1975, a class action suit was filed with the Nova Scotia Human Rights Commission by the Preston Area Education Task Force against the Halifax County Municipal School Board, alleging that the board provided an inferior standard of service on the basis of race and colour.

The suit was settled out of court. Terms of the settlement were released in the form of a joint statement issued by the school board, the Human Rights Commission, and the Education Task Force, which represented the four communities. A Monitoring Committee was established to assist with the implementation of the recommendations.

In September 1991, the Nova Scotia Advisory Group on Race Relations submitted its report. It contained 19 recommendations for redressing inequities in the education system for all Black learners.

In December 1994, the Black Learners Advisory Committee (BLAC), an advisory group to the Minister of Education, submitted its report. It portrayed a disempowered Black community and an educational system that perpetuated this disempowerment. The BLAC Report contained 46 recommendations designed to redress these historic injustices.

In 1996, the Council on African Canadian Education was established as recommended by the BLAC Report. This council was established pursuant to the Education Act.

In 1996, the Department of Education and Culture, adopting a recommendation by the BLAC Report, established the African Canadian Services Division within the Program Branch to develop and co-ordinate the public school and adult education programs, courses, and services for African Canadian learners.

Canada is internationally renowned for its multiracial, multiethnic, and multi-linguistic population. The current waves of migration and immigration to Nova Scotia from all parts of the world continue to reinforce a pluralistic society.

In the quest to participate equally in Nova Scotian society, Mi'kmaq, African Canadian, and other racially visible communities have consistently called for an equitable education and training system. Through various task forces and reports, these communities have recommended that the department, school boards and various councils and agencies carry out anti-racism initiatives such as

- incorporating anti-racism principles into the vision of the department
- reflecting anti-racism principles in the Education Act
- developing a comprehensive race relations equity policy with a clear strategy for implementation
- reviewing the Public School Program and integrating anti-racism education into all curricula, resource materials, guides, school programs, and activities
- developing and implementing anti-racism policies by the school boards
- hiring more Mi'kmaw, African Canadian, and racially visible teachers

As newcomers join in the continual forging of a diverse Nova Scotia, more voices are articulating their needs, concerns, and visions for an equitable education system for their children and for all Nova Scotians. Their articulations of this equity converge with the voices of the Mi'kmaq and African Nova Scotians.

The Department of Education has initiated a number of programs and services to redress inequities and to meet the diverse needs of all Nova Scotian learners.

The Acadian Division of curriculum development at the Department of Education was created in 1975, and the Acadian and French Language Services Branch was created in 1995.

The Acadian schools have been in existence since 1981 and the provincial Acadian school board (Conseil scolaire acadien provincial) since 1996.

The African Canadian Services Division was established within the Program Branch in 1996.

The Mi'kmaq Services Division was established within the Program Branch in 1997.

The Department has revised their procedures for evaluating and authorizing learning resources, to ensure that resources are analysed for assumptions and values regarding issues of equity and diversity.

The African Canadian Services, Mi'kmaq Services, English Program Services, Student Services, Testing and Evaluation, and Acadian and French Language Services Branch, work together to ensure that all curricula reflect diversity.

English as a Second Language (ESL) guidelines and assessment procedures have been developed.

The African Canadian Services, Mi'kmaq Services, and Student Services Divisions assist in the review of provincial assessment practices for racial, cultural, and gender bias.

The department will work with school boards to implement the Racial Equity Policy to ensure that the needs of all students are supported through the development and implementation of specific policies, programs, and resources.

Glossary

Aboriginal Peoples

Aboriginal peoples, with their distinct cultural, spiritual, linguistic, civic, and political systems have occupied the territory now called Canada for thousands of years. Aboriginal peoples include the Indian, Inuit, and Métis peoples of Canada as defined by the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms. Mi'kmaq are the First Nation People of Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, Prince Edward Island, and part of Gaspé, Quebec.

Anti-Racism Education

Anti-racism education is a critical pedagogy that places history, race, and inequity of power relations as the central components for discourse and redress. The principle practice of anti-racism education is to challenge and combat racism in all its forms in the education process. The commitment is to ensure equitable outcomes for all learners and to build a just and humane society for all people.

Assessment

Assessment means the gathering of information or data on student learning.

Community Partnerships

Community partnerships are relationships between institutions and community groups where all the members are equal partners, where the experiences of community members are equally recognized, respected, and valued, and where all community members share in the decision-making process of the institutions.

Critical Literacy

Critical literacy is the awareness of language as an integral part of social relations. It is a way of thinking that involves questioning assumptions; investigating how forms of language construct and are constructed by particular social, historical, cultural, political, and economic contexts; and examining power relations embedded in language and communication.

Culture

A culture is the totality of ideas, beliefs, values, knowledge, perspectives, language, and way of life of a people who share a background based on history, experience, geography, or other factors. Expressions of culture include foods, celebrations, music, visual arts, laws, institutions, customs, and rituals. Culture is both a collective and individual lived experience and consequently may shift and may contain paradoxes, and even oppositional elements.

Discrimination

In the context of this Racial Equity Policy, discrimination is an act of making distinctions among social groups based on such characteristics as race, ethnicity, nationality, language, faith, gender, ability, or sexual orientation that leads to the inequitable treatment of members of the targeted groups. Discrimination, backed by institutional power, results in the effects of withholding and limiting access to the rights, freedoms, privileges, opportunities, benefits, and advantages that are available to other members of society.

Employment Equity

Enployment equity is an approach designed to remove systemic barriers to equality of opportunity in employment by identifying and eliminating discriminatory policies and practices, redressing the effects of historic and continued discrimination, and affirming appropriate representation of deignated groups. An employment equity program usually involves

- a review of all existing employment policies, procedures, and practices
- identification and removal of all discriminatory policies, procedures, and practices
- development and implementation of equitable policies, procedures, and practices
- setting goals and timelines in order to ensure that defined objectives are met by a specific date

Equitable Environment

An equitable environment is one in which everyone can see, hear, and feel the implementation of equity and where everyone acts according to the principles of equity and social justice.

EquityProgramming

Equity programming is programming that is designed to remove barriers to equality by identifying and eliminating discriminatory policies and practices. Such programming is intended both to redress the effects of historic injustice and to prevent inequities.

Ethnic

Ethnic is an adjective used to describe groups that share a common language, race, religion, or national origin.

Ethnocultural Group

An ethnocultural group is a group of people who share a particular cultural heritage or background. Every Canadian belongs to an ethnic group. There are very different and distinct ethnocultural groups among people of African, Asian and European descent and Aboriginal peoples of North, Central, and South American descent in Canada. Some Canadians experience discrimination because oftheir ethnocultural affiliation (ethnicity, religion, nationality, language).

Equity

Equity refers to fairness, principles of justice used to correct or supplement the law.

Evaluation

Evaluation means a judgment made about the value of information or data.

Human Rights Legislation

Human rights are the equal and inalienable rights of every person to inherent dignity and equality. Human rights legislation is a framework of laws that ascribe, measure, and enforce the entitlements ofa people in a given society.

Federally, Canada has the Charter of Rights and Freedoms (1982) and the Canadian Human Rights Act (1977). Each province has its own Human Rights Act (Nova Scotia Human Rights Act, 1969). The United Nations' Universal Declaration of Human Rights was proclaimed on December 10, 1948, followed by the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (1966), the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (1966), and the Optional Protocol to the latter covenant. Canada is a signatory to these legally binding covenants. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights is the authoritative statement of inherent and inalienable rights to which people are entitled.

Indigenous

Indigenous by definition means "belonging to," "native of," or "first"; therefore, it has long been considered that Canada's indigenous people are the Aboriginals of this county. However, in recent years the African Nova Scotian population has used it in reference to the first Africans to arrive in Nova Scotia.

Institutional Racism

Institutional racism is the exercise of notions of racial superiority by social institutions through their policies, practices, procedures and organizational culture and values, either consciously or unconsciously. Institutional racism results in the unequal treatment of, or discrimination against, individuals or groups with non-dominant identities.

Multicultural Education

Multicultural education includes curriculum and pedagogy that recognizes and values the experiences and contributions of all cultural groups. In Canada, multicultural education seeks the inclusion of all racial and cultural groups that have contributed to the creation of a vibrant multiracial, multicultural, multi linguistic, pluralistic Canada.

Prejudice

Prejudice is the process of pre-judging a person or group negatively, usually without adequate evidence or information. Frequently, prejudices are not recognized as false or unsound assumptions. Through repetition, they come to be accepted as "common-sense notions" and, when backed up with power, result in acts of discrimination and oppression.

Racially Visible People

The term racially visible people is used to categorize non-dominant groups by race and colour only, not by citizenship, place of birth, religion, language, or cultural background.

Race

Race is a classification of humankind into groups of people of common ancestry, distinguished by physical characteristics such as skin colour, shape of eyes, hair texture, or facial features.

Racism

Racism is prejudice or discrimination stemming from beliefs in superiority and in the ability to exert power over a person or a group because of a difference of racial, cultural or ethnic background.

Record

Record means a collection of information directly related to a learner and maintained by a school, a school board, or the province, in paper, electronic, or other form.

Social Class

Social class is a hierarchical social order of society based on wealth accessed, acquired, exercised, controlled, and maintained through family, occupation, education, ownership of property/resources, and financial/political powers.

Social Justice

Social justice is a concept based on the belief that each individual and group within a given society has a right to equal opportunity, civil liberties, and full participation in the social, educational, economic, judicial, institutional, and moral freedoms and responsibilities of that society.

Stereotype

A stereotype is the result of attributing unfounded characteristics of a whole group of people to all of its members. Stereotyping exaggerates the uniformity within a group and the differences among groups.

Systemic Discrimination

Systemic discrimination includes policies, practices, and procedures that have an exclusionary impact on various groups of people with shared identities, such as race, age, disability, and/or gender. Institutional barriers, for example, job postings, hiring procedures or unrealistic/irrelevant entrance requirements may have unintentional effect of excluding specific groups.

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